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**FURTHER INFORMATION:**

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**MDPH TO BEGIN PRECAUTIONARY TESTING OF SOME SHELLFISH  
IMPACTED BY RED TIDE**

**BOSTON** – The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) today announced plans to conduct precautionary market testing of shellfish harvested from marine waters potentially impacted by red tide.

The testing will be done on **surf clams and ocean quahogs** harvested from federally designated waters off the coast of Massachusetts. Testing of shellfish in state coastal waters is routinely conducted by the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF), but shellfish caught in federal waters is not.

This year scientists are predicting an abundance of the plankton that is responsible for producing a toxin dangerous to humans if consumed. Exposure to the toxin can result in paralytic shellfish poisoning, or PSP, which can cause a potentially debilitating and fatal disease if a person eats shellfish contaminated with the toxin. It is important to identify shellfish that is contaminated and remove it from sale, because PSP toxin can survive the normal cooking process.

There have been no cases of PSP in Massachusetts since the early 1990's. **Fish, scallops adductor muscles without the roe, crab, shrimp and lobster meat are not affected by PSP.**

"This testing is being done as a precaution to ensure that shellfish available for sale in Massachusetts is safe," said Bureau of Environmental Health Director Suzanne Condon. "We think it is important to increase our testing and enhance our system of monitoring so that residents can continue to feel confident about purchasing and consuming shellfish in Massachusetts."

Harvesting regulations for shellfish are strictly enforced during periods of red tide. State coastal waters are monitored by DMF and are closed to shellfish harvesting when testing indicates an unsafe level of toxins. Open federal waters are not routinely monitored for PSP.

Due to increasing levels of PSP toxin, DMF has closed shellfish beds in the Nauset Estuarine system in Eastham and Orleans and in waters from New Hampshire to the Bourne-Sandwich line near the east end of the Cape Cod Canal, with the exception of the Plymouth-Kingston-Duxbury Bay complex. DPH continues to work closely with DMF in monitoring state coastal waters.

**(more)**

**Shellfish Testing, Page 2 of 2:**

**Information for Consumers:**

Retail stores and restaurants are required to maintain shellfish source identification tags for up to 90-days as required by state regulations. The DPH Food Protection Program and local boards of health are advising commercial food establishments and seafood distributors to closely verify that their shellfish are coming from approved sources.

For more information on red tide and PSP, please visit [www.mass.gov/dph/ceh](http://www.mass.gov/dph/ceh) or call the DPH Bureau of Environmental Health at 617-624-5757. Waters closed to shellfish harvesting are posted on DMF's web site at <http://www.mass.gov/dfwele/dmf/>.

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